

MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF NORDIC BOLOGNA EXPERTS

HELSINKI 01. – 02.10.2008

Participants:

Denmark:

Susanne Suhr Andersen
Stinne Gammelgaard
Christiane Mißbeck-Winberg

Finland:

Maija Airas
Mari Emmes
Juuso Leivonen
Henna Juusola
Outi Jäppinen
Heikki Pekkarinen
Anne Siltala
Eva-Lena Wakonen

Iceland:

Sigurdur Kari Arnason
Gisli Fannberg

Norway:

Etelka Tamminen Dahl
George Francis
Frank Moe

Sweden:

Beatrice Mancini Ulbrich
Elvy Westlund

Absence:

Janerik Lundquist
Óskar Eggert Óskarsson

Welcome and presentation of participants (institutions and National Agencies):

Frank Moe wished everybody welcome on behalf of SIU as coordinator and CIMO as organizer of the meeting. He gave a brief orientation about the background and the aims of the project.

The participants then gave a short presentation of themselves before the five National Agencies were presented.

Denmark

Cirius has about 80 employees. It is now a part of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. Cirius consists of three main parts – Office for Quality and Recognition

(ENIC/NARIC), Office concerned with the internationalization of schools and the Office for international cooperation in higher education and marketing of Denmark as an attractive place to study. (<http://www.cirius.dk>)

Finland:

Cimo has about 100 employees. It was established in 1991 and is now a part of The Ministry of Education. It has two main departments, one dealing with general education and adult education and the other with higher education and Finnish language and culture. There is also a department dealing with marketing etc. (<http://www.cimo.fi>)

Iceland:

The Office of International Education is a part of the University of Iceland, and plays a role both as the National Agency for International Cooperation as well as being the international cooperation office of the University of Iceland. The OIE has 10 employees in all. (<http://www.ask.hi.is>)

Norway:

SIU was established in 1991 under the Council of Universities. From 2004 it is a part of The Norwegian Ministry for Education and Research. It has about 65 employees. Its five main areas of activities are: Programme Administration (f i LLP), Promoting Norwegian Higher Education and Research Abroad, Information and Communication, Competence Building in The Higher Education Sector, Counseling, Studies and Service functions. It is situated in Bergen. (<http://www.siu.no>)

Sweden:

Internationella Programkontoret has about 60 employees. It has offices in two places, Stockholm and Visby. The Stockholm office handles the EU Programs and programs which are national financed. The Visby office handles programs financed by SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) – in the main the same as the other Nordic offices. (<http://www.programkontoret.se/>)

HE system and Bologna in Finland –

(Short notes from the presentation)

- The Finnish Ministry of Education focuses on the Bologna Process and has now organized three international seminars, one for each of the three cycles (the last one just finished)
- Finland has a dual model for higher education, one “academic” strand and one “vocational/professional”. This duality will be kept, but one tries to find new ways in which to cooperate or network.
- The Bologna elements have been implemented.
- A new system of quality control has been implemented, and it is expected that all institutions will be evaluated by 2011.
- Need to focus more on Learning Outcomes

- Degree Structure Reform (see slide)
- There has been a number of mergers already, reducing the number of institutions to 20 universities and 26 polytechnics. This process will continue and is encouraged. The target numbers for 2020 are 15 universities and 18 polytechnics, as well as 4-5 “strategic alliances”.
- Will try to increase resources primarily through becoming more effective and will try to make the institutions focus more on innovation.
- New structure ready by 2012. Target figures will be stipulated for intake, both for individual institutions and cooperation projects, and also for programmes. The general trend will be towards larger entities. The reform aims at more autonomy, both financially and with regard to organizational matters. The reform will be implemented first for the universities and only afterwards for the polytechnics. This is partly to limit the amount of work and not least to be able to learn from any shortcomings that are discovered during the process.
- Higher education will still be free of charge, but it will be possible to charge foreign students. (from 2009) (outside EU/EEA)
- A new strategy for internationalisation of the universities. A relatively fast process. It will not be particularly “new”, but will focus on a few areas.
- Is open for more “tailor made” programmes, partly in cooperation with business.

Questions.

- Can Finnish education become an Export commodity? *Yes.*
- Does Finland have definite guidelines with regard to Student Workload? *No, but the general figure of 1600 hours is taken as the guideline also in Finland.*
- Does Finland have clear guidelines regarding the use of grading scale? *No. Absolute scale is being used.*
- How to support the work with developing Joint Degrees? *There will not be any concrete support for running such projects, but the development can be supported.*
- What is the relationship between ECTS and the Finnish grading system. *ECTS is not specifically mentioned, but the system is fully compatible with ECTS.*
- What about foreign institutions that want to establish themselves in Finland? *These cannot give Finnish degrees but degrees from their country of residence. (Of course, these will in general be compatible and be recognised)*
- Is there a fear that Finnish institutions may be bought up? *Not generally – Finland is probably too small to be of interest.*

State of affairs of the Bologna Process in Nordic Countries

Denmark:

- A national strategy with 300 actions, of these 100 relates to education. Every action must relate to this strategy
- There have been many mergers in the higher education sector, and there are now 8 universities, 10 university colleges and 10 others, down from 150!!
- 2 national evaluation units

- Two qualification frameworks are already in place, one for LLP and one for Higher Education.
- New model for int. scholarships, using a list of the 100 “best” universities (which ranking is used?)
- Short cycle degrees, up to 2 years, can be recognized, but cannot give access to Master Studies.
- Recognition of Prior (Experiential) Learning only for admission (?)
- What about the “academisation” of professional education?
- The grading scale is compatible with ECTS.

NB! EGIS – ECTS Grading Interpretation Scheme.

Finland:

- Scores well in the Stocktaking reports, but the institutional implementation of the Bologna elements is not quite at the same level as the national level.
- Work has begun with Qualifications framework
- With regard to recognition of other types of learning, one can say that it is “work in progress”. Hopefully, the further implementation of Learning Outcomes will prove helpful also with regard to this.
- A need for more training with regard to Bologna.

Iceland:

- 7 universities
- Regulations regarding accreditation – 6 areas
 - o => can offer doctoral degrees
- Qualification framework in place from 2007
- All institutions must describe their programmes in Learning Outcomes to be accredited
- Iceland does not have its own accreditation office, so that on some occasions they will use a foreign office, f i NOKUT

Norway:

- All main elements are in place, although it is fair to say that the level of understanding still leaves something to be desired in some institutions.
- Qualifications framework: A proposal was presented in the spring 2007, with a hearing late in the same year. A concrete proposal is expected by the end of this year. This is a framework for the Higher Education Sector.
- Most of the Bologna elements are incorporated in the Quality Reform of 2003. The Quality reform comprises (among other things), the 3 cycle system, Diploma supplement and a grading scale compatible with ECTS and a credit system equivalent to ECTS (60 credits/year). The grading scale uses absolute values.
- RPL (Realkompetanse) in place with regard to admission, but not very advanced with regard to incorporation into study programs. Both are supported in the Universities Act.

Sweden:

- The Bologna process was originally more of a technical implementation thing, but now has a more “ideological” or “political” contents. For more details please see the power point presentation on the implementation of the Bologna Process in Sweden.

Bologna implementation at institutional level: University of Kuopio, Central Ostrobothnia University of Applied Sciences

- Kuopio + Joensuu => University of Eastern Finland.
- Transition phase 2005 – 2008
- Grading scale changed from 1-12 to 1-5
- Uses the cycle system, except for Medicine and Odontology. Medicine takes 6 years, but candidates must have compulsory practice before they are allowed to start own practice.
- Kuopio has an ISO certificate. This led to some discussion about forms of accreditation. It was pointed out that also DAAD (Germany) wants to have ISO 9001 certification, and that the EU Commission also encourages such actions.
- It was not clear how the merger would be implemented, but it is likely that some programs/subjects will be directed at only one of the institutions which may lead to students having to travel more.

Central Ostrobothnia University:

- 29 study programs. A Danish representative commented that there are only 31 programmes in all of Denmark, which led to a discussion about “What is a study programme?”
- It is still possible to get a “Licentiate” degree, although not very common. But it is a little shorter than a doctorate, and is therefore suitable for some people who do not need a full doctorate.

Working style of the Bologna Expert groups

Denmark:

- The Danish Bologna Expert Group consists of 6 persons, 2 from the Universities, 2 from the university colleges, 1 from the short cycle institutions and 1 student.
- Has own homepage.
- Has staged two conferences, one in connection with Erasmus and one with the ENIC/NARIC centre.
- Maximum two meetings.
- In general, the demand for the group is fairly small
- Very small allocation for the organizing of the group => limited activity for the group as such.

Finland:

- Group has 11 persons
- The group will have 4 meetings this year (6 last year!). It is common to invite other stakeholders to the meetings, depending on the topics.
- Subdivided in smaller working groups which f i organize seminars etc.
- The group has several “highly profiled” participants and is used quite a lot by the Ministry. It would seem that the status of the group is higher than in the other countries, maybe signifies by the fact that so many busy people are willing to/able to participate in so many meetings
- 2 Bologna web pages in Finland – one run by the Ministry and one by the Bologna Experts
- The group receives extra funding, both from the Ministry and from Cimo, so that the total budget is approximately double the amount received from the EU Commission.

Iceland:

- Group consists of 5 people, 4 of these from University of Iceland, 1 student.
- They organize one seminar per year.
- In addition to the formal group there is an informal group with a broader recruiting basis.

Norway:

- Gets no extra funding, although SIU spends much more than the 15% share for staff costs.
- Group consists now of 6 persons, of which one is a student.
- The aim is to have a fair distribution between institutional types, between faculty and administrative staff, between regions and gender (which is quite a lot for such a small group)
- Even with such a small group it is difficult to gather everybody. Last year there was only one meeting for the whole group, although members of the group met on a number of occasions.
- Due to capacity problems at SIU the activity has not been very high in previous years (before last)
- Many institutions have not been aware of the group’s existence.
- Last spring there was a successful seminar which managed to reach the decision level of the institutions. There will be a follow up seminar this year.
- Travels in Norway are very expensive and time consuming, thus limiting the level of activity.
- The group has fair relations with the Ministry, but there is so far no real cooperation.
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Sweden:

- The group consists of 10 people, of these 2 students.
- As for Finland, these are mostly high ranking official (rectorate level etc)

- Normally has 2 or 3 internal meetings where the activities are being planned. Someone from the Ministry will normally be present.
- 2 thematic seminars
- 2 round table meetings
- Select and distribute participation in international seminars early on
- Gets extra funding from the Ministry
- One of the experts acts as leader of the group

ECTS/DS labels: implementation in Nordic countries

Norway:

Norway has had one institution with ECTS Label. About half of the institutions were awarded DS Label. In principle all Norwegian institutions should be eligible for DS Label as Diploma Supplement has been obligatory for several years already.

There are probably also some of institutions that would be able to get an ECTS Label. It is expected that as many as 5 or 6 institutions may apply for it.

However, for both labels the question may be whether the institutions think that the application process is worth the trouble.

Denmark:

As for Norway the enthusiasm is not too great. “What’s the point?” “What status will the labels have?” The many mergers in Denmark may make it more difficult as a merged institution may “disturb” the situation for the new and larger one.

Iceland:

Does not participate in this programme.

Finland:

Has had 2 ECTS Labels and many DS labels. As for the other countries institutions are hard to convince that this is something useful for themselves. A possible strategy might be to point out that getting a label may not be of much use in itself, but that the work needed to obtain the label is work enhancing the quality of the institution. Thus the label is not a goal in itself, but a means towards quality.

Sweden:

2 experts have the role of counselors and two other experts help the NA with the screening process. An information meeting about the re-launch was held in Stockholm at the end of September. About 10 institutions were present at the information meeting. 1 ECTS Label previously awarded.

Qualifications framework

Stinne Gammelgaard gave a general introduction to the topic. Each country gave a short presentation of the state of art in their country

Denmark has had a framework for a number of years. This was originally constructed by an external company, and “incidentally” had 8 levels, the same as EQF.

Norway is awaiting its framework before the end of the year.

Finland is working on it and it is expected to be in place by June 2009

Iceland has had a framework since 2007.

Sweden is working on it. A first hearing/information meeting about the national implementation of EQF is planned by the Ministry at the end of October.

Ideas for next seminar:

- Placements – credits?
- ECTS/ECVET: Copenhagen Process/Bologna Process
- Learning Outcomes/Qualifications framework
- Mobility trends Ingoing/outgoing
- Reviving the Bologna Process - + 2010
- Credits for students active in university governance?
- What is a study programme
- The future of Bologna/ Stocktaking

- *Cooperation with Baltic countries:*
 - o The reactions were not overwhelmingly positive, mainly based on arguments such as: we need to settle this project somewhat more, it will be a problem inviting them and then maybe not wanting to work with them after all.
 - The conclusion here is (most likely) that they will not be invited to the Copenhagen meeting. However, SIU may contact them to find out more about options for a separate project,

All of the above ideas must be further developed. It will be extremely helpful if, in addition to a title there are also ideas for a working style, questions for discussion etc.

Bergen 06.10.08

Frank Moe

